

- 20 -

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A method for preparing a 6-oxo-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphinan comprising oxidising a 6-methoxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^6,\Delta^8$ -morphinan for a time and under conditions sufficient to form  
5 a 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^7$ -morphinan-N-oxide and converting the formed N-oxide to the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphinan.
2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the oxidation is carried out by treating the 6-methoxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^6,\Delta^8$ -morphinan with hydrogen peroxide in the presence of a  
10 carboxylic acid.
3. A method according to claim 2 wherein the carboxylic acid is formic acid or acetic acid.
- 15 4. A method according to claim 3 wherein the carboxylic acid is formic acid.
5. A method according to claim 4 wherein the concentration of formic acid is 45% by weight formic acid in water.
- 20 6. A method according to any one of claims 2 to 5 wherein the 6-methoxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^6,\Delta^8$ -morphinan is treated with a molar excess of hydrogen peroxide at a concentration of 50% by weight in water.
7. A method according to any one of claims 2 to 6 wherein the 6-methoxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^6,\Delta^8$ -morphinan is dissolved in a mixture of the carboxylic acid and a solvent prior to the  
25 addition of the hydrogen peroxide.
8. A method according to claim 7 wherein the solvent is ethanol.
- 30 9. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 8 wherein the oxidation is conducted at a temperature below 50°C.

- 21 -

10. A method according to claim 9 wherin the temperature is about 20°C.
11. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 10 including the additional step of isolating the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^7$ -morphinan-N-oxide before the conversion to 6-oxo-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphinan.
12. A method according to claim 11 wherein the isolation step comprises neutralising the oxidation reaction mixture to a pH of about 7 by adding a base and collecting the N-oxide as a solid.
13. A method according to claim 12 wherein the base is selected from sodium or potassium hydroxide or potassium carbonate.
14. A method according to claim 13 wherein the base is sodium hydroxide.
15. A method according to claim 14 wherein sodium hydroxide is added to the oxidation reaction mixture at a rate which ensures that the reaction temperature reaches 55°C.
16. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 15 wherein the formed N-oxide is converted to the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphine by treating the N-oxide with a reducing agent.
17. A method for converting a 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^7$ -morphinan-N-oxide to a 6-oxo-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphinan comprising subjecting the N-oxide to reducing conditions to ring close the N-methyl group with the 14-hydroxy group forming an oxazolidine ring, and hydrolysing the ring closed oxazolidine product to form the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphinan.
18. A method according to claim 17 wherein the reducing conditions comprise treating

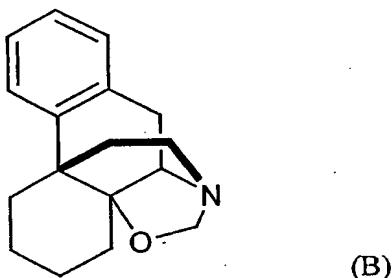
- 22 -

the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^7$ -morphinane-N-oxide with a Fe(II) based reducing agent and formic acid.

19. A method according to claim 17 wherein the hydrolysing step is performed using a  
5 strong acid selected from hydrochloric acid, sulphuric acid, hydrobromic acid or phosphoric acid.

20. A method according to claim 19 wherein the strong acid is hydrochloric acid.

10 21. A method of preparing a morphinane compound having a modified morphinane skeleton of structure (B)



15 said method comprising treating a 6-oxo-N-methyl-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphinane-N-oxide with an Fe(II) reducing agent for a time and under conditions sufficient to ring close the N-methyl group with the 14-hydroxy group.

22. A method according to claim 19 wherein the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^7$ -morphinane-N-oxide is treated as a slurry in methanol with a Fe(II) based reducing agent, whereby formic acid is added.

23. A method according to claim 21 or 22 wherein the Fe(II) reducing agent is FeSO<sub>4</sub>.

25 24. A method for preparing N-alkyl or N-alkenyl 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-morphinanes comprising:

- 23 -

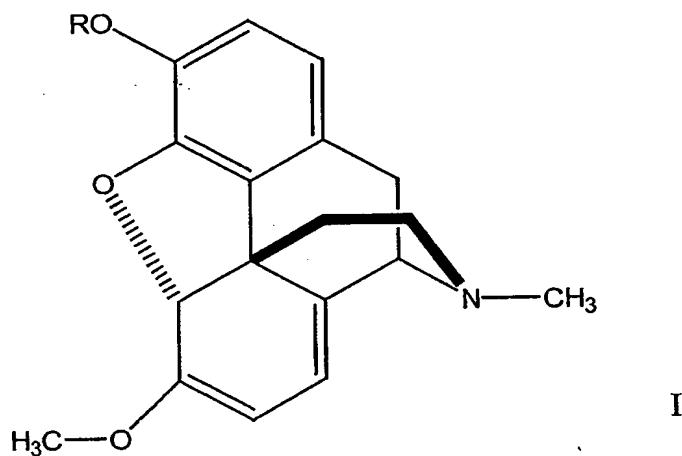
oxidising a 6-methoxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^6,\Delta^8$ -morphinane for a time and under conditions sufficient to form a 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^7$ -morphinane-N-oxide,

5       converting the formed N-oxide to a 6-oxo-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphinane,

reducing the  $\Delta^7$  double bond to form a 6-oxo-14-hydroxy morphinane, and

10      subjecting the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-morphinane to N-alkylation to introduce the N-alkyl or N-alkenyl substituent.

25.     A method according to any one of claims 1 to 16 and 24 wherein the 6-methoxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^6,\Delta^8$ -morphinane is a compound of formula I:



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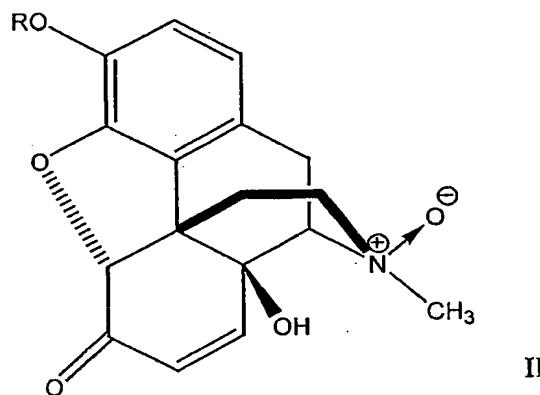
where R is H, C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>6</sub> alkyl, benzyl or acyl.

26.     A method according to claim 25 wherein the 6-methoxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^6,\Delta^8$ -morphinane is a compound of formula I where R is H or CH<sub>3</sub>.

27.     A method according to claim 25 wherein the 6-methoxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^6,\Delta^8$ -morphinane is a compound of formula I where R is H.

- 24 -

28. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 24 wherein the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^7$ -morphinane-N-oxide is compound of formula II:



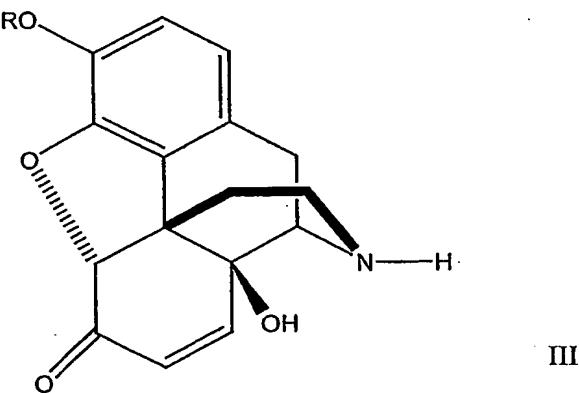
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where R is independently selected from H, C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>6</sub>alkyl, benzyl or acyl.

29. A method according to claim 28 wherein the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^7$ -morphinane N-oxide is compound of formula II where R is H or CH<sub>3</sub>.

30. A method according to claim 29 wherein the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy-N-methyl- $\Delta^7$ -morphinane N-oxide is a compound of formula II where R is H.

15 31. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 20 and 24 wherein the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphinane is a compound of formula III:



- 25 -

wherein R is H, C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>6</sub>alkyl, benzyl or acyl.

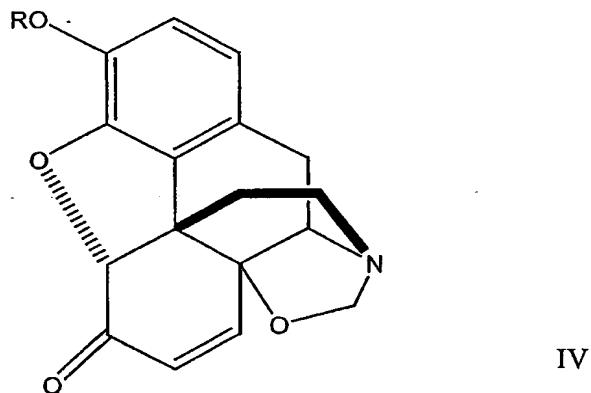
32. A method according to claim 31 wherein the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphinan is a compound of formula III where R is H or CH<sub>3</sub>.

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33. A method according to claim 32 wherein the 6-oxo-14-hydroxy- $\Delta^7$ -morphinan is a compound of formula III where R is H.

34. An oxazolidine of formula IV:

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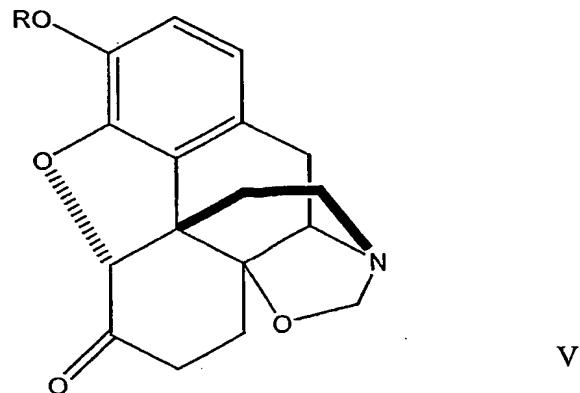
where R is H, C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>6</sub>alkyl, benzyl or acyl.

15 35. An oxazolidine of formula IV according to claim 34 wherein R is H, CH<sub>3</sub> or benzyl.

36. An oxazolidine of formula IV according to claim 35 wherein R is H.

20 37. An oxazolidine of formula V:

- 26 -



where R is H, C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>6</sub>alkyl, benzyl or acyl.

5 38. An oxazolidine of formula V according to claim 37 wherein R is H or CH<sub>3</sub>.

39. An oxazolidine of formula V according to claim 38 wherein R is H.

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